

Parasite Control

Safeguard your cat and home against pesky parasites such as fleas, ticks and mosquitoes.

Arnold Plotnick, DVM

Posted: Tue Mar 29 00:00:00 PST 2005

Tricky Ticks Ticks bother dogs much more than cats. It is speculated that cats' meticulous grooming habits allow them to remove most ticks from their coats before they attach. Because cats are much less susceptible to ticks, they rarely fall victim to dangerous tick-borne diseases such as Lyme disease, ehrlichiosis and Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Although most once-a-month flea products do not claim to be effective against ticks, some effectively guard against both. Maddening Mosquitoes As if malaria wasn't bad enough, in recent years the emergence of West Nile virus has rekindled our revulsion for the lowly mosquito. Dog owners are well aware of the mosquito's role in transmitting heartworm disease to their canine companions. Cat owners and many veterinarians have admittedly underestimated the incidences and consequences of heartworm disease in cats, with sometimes disastrous results. Cats do not naturally host heartworm disease, so mild infections can cause serious consequences. Heartworm disease in cats may also mimic asthma, causing cases to go misdiagnosed or undiagnosed. An effective treatment remains elusive, and the prognosis for cats with heartworm disease varies greatly, with some cats dying from their illness. Fortunately, heartworm disease is preventable in cats. Ivermectin, a preventive medication administered monthly as a chewable treat, has been available for years. A similar compound, selamectin, can be applied topically, and also prevents heartworm. "[Because] heartworm disease is transmitted by mosquitoes, cats that are kept indoors can be exposed, as well as those that go outside. All cats in an area that has heartworms should be on monthly heartworm prevention," says Anne Sinclair, DVM, a board-certified feline specialist and owner of Cat Sense Feline Hospital & Boarding in Bel Air, Md. With the assortment of highly effective products available, summer parasite season has gone from miserable to manageable. A close working relationship between veterinarians and cat owners is necessary to control these critters so cats can remain comfortable and healthy during the warm summer months.